

VA**U.S. Department
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News Release

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The Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials welcomed new member Tomas Alvarado to its semi-annual meeting in Washington, D.C., June 8 and 9.

Said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West Jr., "I look forward to hearing from Mr. Alvarado and other committee members as we work to provide the quality service our Nation's veterans deserve."

The Congressionally-mandated committee advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on issues involving the operations of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), its State Cemetery Grants, headstone and marker and Presidential Memorial Certificates programs, and related burial benefits. The Committee assists the Secretary in assuring NCA plans and programs are meeting the needs of the Nation's veterans and their eligible family members.

Alvarado served in the U.S. Marine Corps during Vietnam and is a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, American GI Forum and AMVETS. He currently serves as Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs and has served as its deputy director. He also was chief consultant on the Committee on Veterans Affairs to the State Legislative Minority Caucus. While working as an assistant to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, he successfully recommended an overhaul and upgrade of the County Veterans Service Office. He was a member of the staff of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. Alvarado has worked as a veterans' activist throughout his professional public policy career and, in his volunteer activities, as an advocate for educational and medical benefits for veterans and their dependents. He has served as an advisor to many elected officials in California and has been appointed to numerous commissions or committees serving the veterans community.

While serving in Vietnam with the 4th Marines 2nd Battalion, Alvarado was twice wounded during the 1968 Tet Offensive, where he was a rifleman, team leader, platoon sergeant, platoon commander and squad leader.

Information on VA burial benefits is available from national cemetery offices and VA regional offices. For more information, call 1-800-827-1000 or visit the VA home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.va.gov> or the National Cemetery Administration home page at <http://www.cem.va.gov>. Veterans with discharges other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children are eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. VA also provides grave markers and headstones for the unmarked graves of eligible veterans even if they are not buried in a national cemetery. VA does not reserve space in national cemeteries prior to the time of need.